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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis reports the results of a questionnaire survey of nonprofessionals employed in the reference departments of 31 southeastern urban public libraries. conducted to determine the use, training, and educational and work experience characteristics of these employees, this study was intended to serve as a supplement to the existing body of research dealing with both nonprofessionals in general and reference nonprofessionals in particular, and to introduce the concept of describing nonprofessional employees by virtue of the placement of their job positions in the Library Education and Personnel Utilization (LEPU) career ladder structure. Two types of surveys were sent, one for the reference directors and one for the nonprofessionals they identified. A total of 112 nonprofessionals were employed in the 25 libraries choosing to participate in this part of the study, and all 112 sent back a survey. Findings are summarized with a subsequent discussion of their significance. It is strongly suggested that this research be replicated in order to provide support to the approach of isolation of differences in job status, reference utilization, educational background, work longevity, and position advancement, which is not possible if the population is described as one group. A 26-item bibliography is provided, as well as five appendixes which include the LEPU recommended career ladder, copies of the two questionnaires used, and initial and follow-up form letters to the directors of reference at the surveyed libraries. (CGD)

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THE CHARACTERISTICS, USE, AND TRAINING OF REFERENCE NONPROFESSIONALS IN SELECTED SOUTHEASTERN URBAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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by

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A master's paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science

Chapel Hill

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Smith, Daniel R. The Characteristics, Use, and Training of Reference Nonprofessionals in Selected Southeastern Urban Public Libraries. A master's paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. March, 1988. 65 pages. Advisor: B. Moran

This study describes a questionnaire survey of nonprofessionals employed in the reference departments of 23 Southeastern urban public libraries. The survey was conducted to determine the use, training, and educational and work experience characteristics of these employees.

Approximately one-third of all reference service in the surveyed libraries is provided by nonprofessionals. About one-half of the libraries provide formal in-house training for their reference nonprofessionals and most provide continuing education incentives. Slightly over two-thirds of the surveyed reference nonprofessionals possess a bachelors or graduate degree. Over one-third have had training in computer-related skills and 9% are currently pursuing an MLS degree. Nearly one-quarter of the group act in a supervisory capacity. As a whole, the surveyed group has fairly consistent career longevity, but significant employment attrition is discernable in mid- and lower-level positions in the 6-10 year range.

Headings: Non-professional assistants
Public libraries - Metropolitan areas
Public libraries - Reference services
Reference services - Public libraries
Surveys - Reference services

INTRODUCTION

As libraries have evolved into complex and diversified organizations, a greater number of positions has opened up for those who want to work in a library environment but who do not for various reasons have the MLS, the customary requirement for a professional position. The introduction of automation and cutbacks in library budgets have created the demand for individuals competent in the routine tasks and technical specialties of library service who lack the more comprehensive, conceptual view of overall operations required of professional librarians.

Budget cuts in the late seventies and eighties and the automation of many library operations have caused many libraries to depend heavily on nonprofessionals for many tasks which heretofore had been performed by professional librarians. These nonprofessionals can be found working in positions throughout the library. The impact of this new type of worker in technical services has been significant. An appraisal of cataloging services by Kaye Gapen (1979) stated that aside from original cataloging and revision of LC data, nonprofessionals were performing most run-of-the-mill cataloging functions. The capability of downloading cataloging records from OCLC to an individual library's own

computer system has made possible an even greater shift toward utilizing the nonprofessional for locating and verifying online copy, and integrating such with the in-house bibliographic control system. In acquisitions, the technical functions involved with ordering and processing of materials are well within the capabilities of clerical staff, leaving the more cognitive responsibilities of selection and evaluation of materials and vendors as well as price and contract negotiation to the professional librarian (Chapman, 1984).

The aspect of library work which is perhaps most amenable to direction by nonprofessionals is found in the circulation department.

> "The requisite skills of circulation workers are primarily clerical and their work easy to reduce to a routine. It is also apparent that prior knowledge of library techniques is not essential since circulation procedures vary considerably from one institution to the next . . . . The record-keeping function of this department is its raison d'etre. It might justifiably be said that the business of circulation is business." (Miller, 1975)

Because of the technically specific nature of those skills required for circulation, as opposed to those conceptual skills taught as the standard fare of professional library education, many libraries have found it practical and beneficial to place their circulation department under the direction of a high-level nonprofessional. This person will usually have a good deal of experience in that library's particular system.

It has been in the past, and continues to be, a point of controversy as to the wisdom and effectiveness of using nonprofessionals in a reference capacity. Arguments for this trend are based on fiscal conservatism and on the supposition that a generous amount of professional working hours will be freed from the burden of continual ready-reference activity. Opponents of the practice insist that nonprofessionals, in general, lack the training in conceptual analysis which would enable them to ascertain the true nature and emphasis of a patron's information needs. For this reason, opponents feel that nonprofessionals must be supervised constantly at the reference desk to ensure that no patron fails to receive adequate information. This ongoing supervision, plus the intensive in-service training which is necessary to produce a competent reference nonprofessional, opponents feel, offset the theoretical savings in professional time and cost (Peele, 1980).

Despite arguments both for and against the effectiveness of nonprofessionals in reference service, at the present time nonprofessionals are being used, and used on a regular basis, in the reference departments of all types of libraries. Therefore, since nonprofessionals seem to have become an essential part of reference service, it behooves the professional library community to look closely at the nonprofessionals themselves and those factors which have a

direct effect on their utilization, performance, and job satisfaction.

This paper will concentrate on the use of nonprofessionals in reference service--on their job status, their training, and their personal and educational characteristics. It will explore previous research into the effectiveness of the nonprofessional as a reference assistant and consider past descriptive surveys which assessed the education and work-related characteristics of this group. Finally, it will present the results of a descriptive survey of reference nonprofessionals in a group of southeastern urban public libraries.

Definition of Terms:

The following terms will be used in the text of this paper and may require some clarification.

Southeastern States - The states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Urban Public Library - A headquarters public library in a metropolitan area that serves a user population of 250,000 or more.

Nonprofessional - Any library employee occupying a library position which does not require a masters degree in library science or its equivalent.

Library Associate - A library employee occupying a position within the highest category of nonprofessional duties and responsibilities as set forth in the Library Education and Personnel Utilization (LEPU) Statement (see Appendix A for an explanation of the suggested duties and responsibilities of this group).

Library Technical Assistant - An employee occupying a position which duties and responsibilities fall within the middle category of the LEPU nonprofessional career ladder (see Appendix A).

Library Clerk - An employee whose duties and responsibilities fall within the lowest category of the LEPU nonprofessional career ladder (see Appendix A).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Previous research involving the reference nonprofessional has concentrated on five broad areas: the reference efficiency of this level of employee, their use at reference desks, the inservice training and continuing education opportunities offered to the group, the career ladder structure and advancement possibilities available to them, and the education and work experience characteristics of this segment of the library work force. In the following pages, the results of previous studies and surveys will be summarized and discussed.

Reference Efficiency:

Bunge's landmark study in 1967 of Professional Education and Reference Efficiency affirmed that professional librarians were more efficient than nonprofessionals in satisfying reference queries but not to a great extent. The actual figure was less than twenty percent. Indeed, he found that the biggest difference was not in the correctness or thoroughness of the information presented, but rather in the amount of time required to retrieve it. Nonprofessionals were somewhat slower. Young (1970) measured the reference performance of a single student

academic library assistant after an intensive orientation period and two months of on-going in-service training. While working 15 hours per week during the two month observation period, the student received a total of 299 questions. Of this total, 147 were directional, 114 ready-reference, and 31 were research oriented. Of the 299 questions, 255 were answered correctly by the student in less than 5 minutes while the remainder were referred to a librarian. Heinlen (1976) reports similar positive results with the use of student library assistants. According to Heinlen, 81% of the questions asked at the California State University at Fresno reference desk were of a ready-reference or directional content and 19% of a research nature. While a professional librarian manned this desk, 89% of all questions were answered to the patrons' satisfaction, while in the case of 11% of all queries, inaccurate or incomplete information was given or no information at all was located. Moreover, 62% of all the questions answered unsatisfactorily were in the research category. In an effort to improve the satisfactory response rate, Heinlen replaced the librarian at the front desk with a trained student assistant whose job it was to screen all ready-reference and directional questions. All questions requiring a search effort would be referred to the professional librarian who was now positioned at a desk off to the side. Telephone inquiries also went first through the

assistant's desk. As a result of freeing the librarian's time from simple reference activities, Heinlen claimed that during the first year of the new system the total number of reference questions answered correctly increased by about one-third. Also, the professional librarians were able to satisfactorily answer more than double the number of research inquiries as compared to the previous year.

Halldorsson and Murfin (1977) concluded that nonprofessionals performed adequately on reference queries which did not include faulty or misleading information within a specific subject area. On queries that did contain such misinformation, the nonprofessionals' success was significantly less than that of professionals. The researchers speculated that lack of subject-specific knowledge may have been more responsible for this discrepancy than the lack of a professional library education. St. Clair and Aluri (1977) analyzed reference questions presented at the University of Nebraska at Omaha reference desk over a period of some 44 days. A total of 5,588 questions were scrutinized. In close accord with Heinlen, they found that 80% of those questions could probably be answered by nonprofessionals with adequate in-service training. Kok and Pierce (1982) also made a study of questions asked at reference desks in academic libraries and came up with even more radical results. They found that only 0.7 percent of questions were of an in-depth time-consuming nature. The

authors did not attempt to examine the success of nonprofessionals in answering such questions but the strong inference is that such would be within the capabilities of this level of employee.

Research studies have varied in the strength of their endorsement of nonprofessionals in reference service. However, they seem to have established a common ground in confirming that there is a large range of questions within reference work which are amenable to nonprofessional involvement.

Use at Reference Desks:

Boyer and Theimer (1975) in a survey of 141 reference departments in four-year college and university libraries reported that 69% of the libraries in their population used nonprofessionals at the reference desk. Mugnier (1975) in a survey of 136 public libraries declared that 71.8% of all the libraries surveyed utilized library associates in some type of reference capacity. Watson and Landis (1977), in a survey of ARL libraries, discovered that in 73% of all reference departments, nonprofessionals were responsible for interlibrary loan requests; in 60% they were responsible for routine ready-reference; and in 84% they handled reference catalog maintenance activities. Stebelman (1981), in another survey of 88 ARL libraries, found that 31.3% of reference desk hours were occupied by either student assistants or paraprofessionals. Courtois and

Goetsch (1984) in a survey of 64 four-year college libraries in the state of Illinois reported that 61% of their group indicated that nonprofessionals were used at reference/information desks. Of this number, 64% used nonprofessionals to cover more than 25% of their desk hours. Wheat (1987), in a survey of 34 academic libraries in the state of North Carolina, found that 61.76% of the respondents used nonprofessionals at the reference desk on a scheduled basis. According to Wheat:

> "Overall in North Carolina the nonprofessionals account for 31.32 percent of the reference staff and fill 23.59 percent of the desk hours. The nonprofessional reference staff work at the desk for only 26.03 percent of the available hours at (4-year college libraries and 20.40 percent at university libraries." (Wheat, 1987)

An on-going investigation of the use of nonprofessionals in reference is a necessity if library research and planning are to reflect the unique needs of this group with regard to training, advancement, and compensation. Furthermore, the extent of nonprofessional contributions to reference service must necessarily affect the means by which this service should be structured and presented to the patron.

In-Service Training and Continuing Education:

Given the broad use of nonprofessionals in reference service, several research efforts have attempted to ascertain the extent of in-service training provided to this group of employees. Bunge found that as the amount of

opportunity for in-service training went up, the efficiency of nonprofessionals approached that of professionals. Boyer and Theimer found that some 80% of their population of small, medium, and large college and university libraries did not provide any formal in-service training for their nonprofessionals. Of the 58 libraries in their group, 55 did claim to possess an informal training program of some sort, i.e., tours, general orientation, reference interview techniques, etc. Both Young and Heinlen attributed the successes of their student library assistants, in large part, to intensive orientation and in-service training activities. Mugnier reported that in her study of public libraries only 23.1% had formal in-service training programs for associates. Courtois and Goetsch reported that, of a group of 33 four-year colleges in the state of Illinois, only two possessed a formalized training program for nonprofessionals. These programs included selected readings, quizzes, exercises, and departmental seminars on specific reference sources. Two of the 33 recommended but did not require formal coursework in library science. Thirty-seven percent provided orientation for nonprofessional staff in the form of tours, procedure manuals, or training sessions on department or library operations. These orientations did not, however, include training in specific reference sources. Seventy-three percent of the institutions (including many of those providing procedural

orientations) responded that nonprofessionals learn reference sources "on the job" or by a brief period of observation at the desk.

Closely allied with in-service training is the continuing education of the nonprofessional in the academic environment. Whereas training is more technical and job-oriented, continuing education provides the employee with general conceptual skills which enable her/him to view the job from a broader intellectual perspective. This enables the nonprofessional to act as an agent of beneficial change, redefining job parameters, and thereby increasing his or her value to the library. Libraries can play active roles in stimulating the continuing formal education of their nonprofessionals by offering such incentives as tuition assistance, flexible scheduling, allowing courses to be taken on paid time, and, of course, promotion and salary advancement for meeting certain educational criteria (Johnson, 1971). Surprisingly, few surveys have directed themselves toward the delineation of the continuing education incentives offered by libraries. Mugnier stated that 59.6% of those public library administrators questioned in her survey thought that a set of basic continuing education courses was important for library associates, but no indication was given of any incentives or assistance provided for this purpose. Only Boyer and Theimer's survey directly addressed the question of continuing education oppor-

tunities for nonprofessionals. In their group of academic libraries, 70% of those libraries using nonprofessionals stated that these employees could take classes during the working day. However, time had to be made up in one-half of those libraries. Fifty-one percent of the libraries provide tuition waivers for nonprofessionals who take classes. Also, nonprofessionals could attend professional library meetings during the working day in 74% of the libraries responding.

It is nearly a platitude to state that libraries utilizing nonprofessionals in reference or in any other capacity should provide adequate and on-going training and continuing education opportunities for this level of personnel. This should be done not only for the sake of increased reference proficiency but also to provide the nonprofessional with skills which will enable her/him to advance to broader reponsibilities and higher compensation. Furthermore, the training provided should not be limited to informal programs which often lack consistency and continuity. The logical structure and comprehensive scope of formal programs make them invaluable tools which libraries should not ignore (Creth, 1981; White, 1985).

Career Ladder Structure and Advancement:

The installation of a career ladder for nonprofessionals promotes upward mobility and encourages just compensation for meritorious achievement and longevity.

The ALA addressed the issue of career ladders and employee advancement in its Library Education and Personnel Utilization (LEPU) statement issued first in 1970 and then reissued in 1972 to remove sexist language. LEPU contains a career ladder framework for both professional and nonprofessional positions. This paper will concern itself only with the latter. Appendix A is a summary of the three categories of nonprofessional positions suggested by the ALA and the corresponding duties and responsibilities of each category of employee. Within each position category, multiple levels of responsibility and supervisory control are recommended to provide advancement possibilities within categories as well as between them. The intention of the ALA is that this career ladder be fused with an overlapping salary scale to allow nonprofessionals through competence, service, and continuing education to advance to positions of responsibility and compensation which parallel mid-level professional positions (ALA, 1972).

The advantages of a career ladder such as that proposed in LEPU are by no means restricted to employees alone.

> There are also advantages to the library's administration. These include the formulation of clearly articulated guidelines for promotion of support staff members and a written management commitment to assisting support staff in the development of their skills, education, and abilities. Additionally, the library may benefit from better library service and from savings in training and other costs resulting from lower turnover.

> Career ladders also enable career-oriented support staff to set and achieve realistic goals within the organization. Another advantage lies in the capability of the profession to recruit from the ranks of the support staff those persons who are most able to make a contribution as librarians and to encourage them to pursue master's degrees. (Clemens, 1983, p. 321).

Previous research suggests that the adoption of LEPU guidelines by the library community has been slow and fragmented. In a 1983 survey of 160 academic libraries, Clemens found that fewer than two-thirds of the libraries surveyed have even one position which could be equated with the library associate category. She also discovered that whereas four-fifths of the libraries surveyed allowed promotion from clerical and technical assistant categories to higher categories such as administrative assistant or office manager, fewer than half offered this opportunity to the higher level associates category. Clemens concluded that many academic libraries have created a dead-end category at the library associate level and thus rendered this position unattractive to lower level personnel who could find greater advancement potential by moving outside the scope of direct library service.

In a 1974 survey of public, junior college, and university library directors, Dana Gould found considerable lack of agreement concerning the role, status and position classification of nonprofessionals.

> . . . among the three types of libraries, paraprofessionals were classified differently. Some administrators classified all paraprofessionals as

> clerks, other technicians, and still others had two or three different categories corresponding to clerks, technicians, and associates. Several library directors even reported that the technician or associate was classified as Librarian I. (Gould, 1974).

The existing studies suggest that considerable effort needs to be made by the entire American library community to expand and standardize their career ladders for nonprofessionals along LEPU guidelines. Without such an effort, libraries cannot hope to offer advancement potential and compensation reasonably competitive with that found in the private sector.

Education and Work Experience Characteristics:

A handful of general descriptive studies have been directed toward nonprofessionals as a whole. Even fewer have dealt with reference nonprofessionals as a distinct group. Bunge compiled data concerning work experience, education, and age for his subjects and correlated these variables with the reference efficiency measurements he devised. He found no significant difference based upon age and, surprisingly, no significant difference when reference work experience and performance were correlated. As mentioned earlier, he found a significant, though not great, difference based upon formal education but no difference based upon the recency of that education.

Boyer and Theimer collected data on the educational levels of reference assistants in three sizes of college

libraries. They found that overall roughly three-fifths of the reference nonprofessionals have bachelor's degrees or an additional advanced degree, while about one-fifth have a junior college education and one-fifth no college at all. Roper (1977), in a survey of health science library technicians, found that 67.9% had qualified for a degree, license, or certificate from a four-year college, 27% had qualified from a junior/community college or technical school, while only 5% had no college at all. With regard to library experience, 58.3% of the technicians in Roper's survey had worked from 0 to 5 years in some type of library, 25.3% had worked from 6 to 10 years, 7.7% had worked from 11 to 15 years, and 5.1% had over 15 years library work experience. Roper also collected information on the age, sex, marital status, and salaries of this class of employee.

Wheat discovered in her 1987 survey that 18.52% of nonprofessionals working in her group of North Carolina academic libraries possessed a Master's degree, 37.04% had only Bachelor's degrees, 5.56% only junior/community college degrees and 38.88% had only a high school education. With regard to experience, Wheat found that 68.52% of the nonprofessionals had six years or less library experience, 11.11% had 6-10 years, and 20.37% had greater than ten years experience. To the author's knowledge, no survey of the education and work experience characteristics

of reference nonprofessionals in the public library environment has been done.

In summary, it is evident that the literature contains few examples of serious research on the topic of nonprofessionals in reference service. The majority of the studies that have been done have taken place within academic library reference departments. Data from public libraries is virtually nonexistent. However, the research which has been done supports the following inferences:

1. A wide range of reference queries are within the abilities of nonprofessionals to address.

2. Nonprofessionals are currently widely used in reference and information departments of both academic and public libraries.

3. On the average, about one-third of all reference desk hours in academic libraries are filled by nonprofessionals.

4. Academic libraries seem to be highly deficient in providing formal in-service training to their reference nonprofessionals.

5. The adoption of adequate career ladders for nonprofessionals by both public and academic libraries has been slow and fragmented.

6. Nonprofessionals in academic libraries are generally well-educated, with about three-fifths of the

group possessing a bachelor's degree or graduate-level training.

7. Nonprofessionals in academic libraries seem to be transitional rather than career employees as evidenced by the tremendous decline in the number of those employees with more than 6 years experience.

Further research is necessary, particularly in public libraries, to put together an accurate composite of the nonprofessional library employee and the institutional contingencies which affect his/her job satisfaction and occupational development.

METHODOLOGY

A study was conducted to determine the use, training, and educational and work experience characteristics of nonprofessional personnel in reference departments in urban public libraries in the southeastern United States. It was felt that this research was justified based upon both the paucity of descriptive studies on the topic in general and the age of the research that does exist. This dearth of information was particularly acute regarding information relating to the public library environment. Although both Bunge and Mugnier conducted their studies in public libraries, neither of these studies were general descriptive surveys. For this reason, the public library was chosen as the focus of the current effort. The research which has been attempted here is a broad descriptive survey similar in many respects to those of Boyer and Theimer and Courtois and Goetsch. Drawing from these studies and others analyzed earlier in this paper, eight research questions were formulated. They are as follows:

1. How do the career advancement ladders for nonprofessionals in urban public libraries correspond to that career ladder model set down in the ALA

Library Education and Personnel Utilization statement?

2. What is the educational background of reference nonprofessionals as broken down by position category using the LEPU statement model?

3. What is the library-related work experience background of reference nonprofessionals as broken down by position category using the LEPU statement model?

4. Are urban public libraries offering formal programs of in-service training to their reference nonprofessionals?

5. Are reference nonprofessionals interested in pursuing a professional library education?

6. Do urban public libraries offer career development incentives to encourage reference nonprofessionals to continue their formal education?

7. During what percentage of operating hours are nonprofessionals working the reference desk?

8. Do reference nonprofessionals frequently work the reference desk without the supervision of a professional?

Two additional research questions were devised to address the author's personal interest in the topic. The first of these is:

9. Is training in computer skills and/or library automation common among reference nonprofessionals?

To the author's knowledge, no previous study has dealt with this issue. It is felt that with the growing dependence of libraries on automated systems, the presence or absence of such training could become a crucial factor in determining the relative efficiency and effectiveness of reference services. The next question is:

10. Do reference nonprofessionals act in a supervisory capacity?

The degree to which leadership and organizational responsibility are placed in the hands of nonprofessionals will, it is believed, determine in large part the impact of this group on reference service as a whole. This question, as well, seems to have gone unanswered in previous research efforts.

It was decided that a mail survey would be initiated to obtain answers to these questions.

The Survey:

Due to limited funding, it was decided to limit the survey population to the largest public libraries in the Southeastern area. This followed the assumption that a larger pool of subjects could be drawn from these libraries with a minimal number of questionnaire mailings. Two separate questionnaires were drawn up. The administrative questionnaire was directed toward the reference directors of the surveyed libraries and included questions addressing

the career ladder structure, in-service training, continuing education incentives, and reference staffing patterns of each library (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was pretested on five libraries of a slightly smaller size than those included in the study population. An additional questionnaire was devised which was directed toward the nonprofessional worker and solicited information on the job status, and educational and work experience characteristics of each subject (see Appendix C). This questionnaire was pretested on several UNC library students who had previously worked in a nonprofessional capacity in some type of library.

Population:

All urban public libraries in the Southeast serving user populations of 250,000 or more were selected from the American Library Directory to receive the administrative questionnaire. Those states considered to be southeastern were Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The total number of libraries which met these criteria was 31. The administrative questionnaire was sent to all 31 libraries.

The letter accompanying the administrative questionnaire was addressed to the director of reference of each library (see Appendix D). The letter stated that the survey would be limited to those nonprofessionals working

in the reference department and/or information center of the headquarters library of each system. Aside from the information requested on the administrative questionnaire, each reference director was asked to distribute questionnaires to those nonprofessionals which he/she had identified. A postage-paid envelope was included for the reference director to return this administrative questionnaire.

If they chose to take part in the survey, each reference director was mailed the appropriate number of nonprofessional questionnaires with a cover letter (see Appendix E) asking them to distribute these questionnaires to each nonprofessional employee. A postage-paid envelope was included for the reference director to return the questionnaires after they had been completed and collected.

Returns:

In response to the initial mailing on October 25th, 1987 of 31 initial questionnaires, 15 or 48% were returned. After three follow-up letters had been mailed to those who had not answered, the total response rose to 28 or 90%. Of these respondents, three chose to not take part in the survey of nonprofessional reference employees. All 25 of the remaining libraries, or 81%, returned complete and usable follow-up surveys. A total of 112 nonprofessionals were employed in these libraries' reference departments and each of the 112 sent back a survey.

RESULTS

Use at Reference Desks:

By far the majority of nonprofessionals employed in the reference departments of the surveyed libraries occupied positions which reference directors placed within the Associate category as defined by the LEPU Statement. Sixty-nine of 112 respondents or 61.6% are at the Associate level, 24 or 21.4% are at the Technical Assistant level, while 19 or 17% occupy Clerical positions.

Nineteen of the 25 responding libraries (76%) utilized nonprofessionals at their reference or information desks. This figure is fairly close to those percentages found in both Boyer and Theimer's survey of academic libraries, and Mugnier's findings in public libraries (69% and 71.8%, respectively), while being a good bit greater than the 61% reported in both Courtois and Goetsch's and Wheat's surveys of academic libraries. Out of a total of 1,767 nonprofessional reference desk hours in the current survey, 1,387 (78.5%) were filled by Associate level personnel, 194 (11%) were staffed by Technical Assistants, and 186 (10.5%) were the responsibility of Clerical employees.

Table 1 (page 27) gives a comparison of total professional and nonprofessional reference desk hours at each of the 19 libraries, the number of hours each desk is in operation each week, and the percentage of desk hours staffed by professionals and nonprofessionals, respectively. It is clear that there are broad differences among the libraries with respect to the use of nonprofessionals in this capacity. The range spans from a low of 7.6% of desk hours staffed by nonprofessionals in library #2 to a formidable 84.6% of desk hours in library #17. Three libraries use nonprofessionals for less than 10% of reference desk service while five libraries provide a majority of their service with this level of employee. The average library, as shown in the tabulation at the bottom of the table, uses nonprofessionals to provide 33.6% of its reference/ information desk service while 66.4% is provided by professionals. These findings closely concur with those of Stebelman and Courtois and Goetsch in academic libraries and are not far from those of Wheat, also in academic libraries.

Table 1 also documents the number of reference desk hours worked by nonprofessionals in each library at a time when no professional is present at the desk and the percentage of total desk service thereof. Once again a wide disparity is present. The range is from 0% up to 38.7% of desk service hours. Eight libraries have unsupervised

TABLE 1

USE OF NONPROFESSIONALS AT REFERENCE DESKS IN SURVEYED LIBRARIES
(N = 19)

Library #	Prof. Hrs.	Nprof. Hrs.	Weekly Desk Service (Hrs.)	% of desk service Prof.	% of desk service Nprof.	Nprof. unsup. hrs.	Nprof. Unsup. Hrs. (% of desk service)
1	280.5	186.5	47	60.1	39.9	94	20.1
2	78	106.5	56	42.3	57.7	71.5	38.7
3	180	171.5	80	51.2	48.8	2	0.6
4	61	5	66	92.4	7.6	5	7.6
5	227.5	271.5	60	45.6	54.4	138	27.7
6	240	25	73	90.6	9.4	0	0
7	72	16	62	81.8	18.2	1	1.1
8	300	90	58	76.9	23.1	38	9.7
9	67.5	77	68	46.7	53.3	35	24.2
10	90	20	58	81.8	18.2	0	0
11	109	77.5	55	58.5	41.5	37.5	20.1
12	68	40	65	63.0	37.0	17.5	16.2
13	234	96	64.5	70.9	29.1	46.5	14.1
14	60	112	70	34.9	65.1	42	24.4
15	262.5	25	70	91.3	8.7	0	0
16	900	298.5	70	75.1	24.9	153.5	12.8
17	20	110	63	15.4	84.6	57.5	27.9
18	136.5	19	68	87.8	12.2	19	12.2
19	110	20	69	84.6	15.4	0	0
Average Library	184	93	64.3	66.4	33.6	39.9	14.4

nonprofessionals at the reference/information desk for less than 10% of desk service hours while seven libraries are in this situation more than 20% of the time. The average library in the sample utilizes nonprofessionals in an unsupervised capacity for 14.4% of total desk service hours.

In-Service Training and Continuing Education:

Table 2 (page 29) presents a breakdown of the formal in-house training and continuing education incentives provided by each of the 25 libraries in the survey. The total number of libraries which offer a particular incentive are listed at the bottom of the table along with the percentage of the entire group represented by that number. To the far right of the table are miscellaneous incentives which individual libraries make available to their nonprofessionals.

A sizeable percentage (48%) of the group offers formal in-service training courses or seminars. This is in sharp contrast to Boyer and Theimer's and Courtois and Goetsch's findings of only 20% and 6%, respectively, in academic libraries and Mugnier's report of 23.1% of surveyed public libraries providing these programs. Of the 112 nonprofessionals questioned in this study, 53 or 47.3% stated that they had attended in-house training courses or seminars at their libraries during the past year. Of this

TABLE 2

IN-HOUSE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION INCENTIVES OFFERED BY SURVEYED LIBRARIES
(N = 25)

Library #	Tuition Assistance	Flexible Scheduling for Day Classes	Library-Related Classes on Work Time	Formal In-House Courses or Seminars	Professional Meetings or Seminars on Work Time	Other
1	1	1	1	0	0	
2	0	1	0	1	1	Library scholarship trust
3	0	1	0	0	0	
4	1	0	0	0	0	
5	0	0	0	0	0	
6	0	1	0	0	1	
7	1	0	0	0	0	
8	0	1	0	1	1	
9	0	1	0	0	0	
10	1	0	0	0	0	
11	0	1	1	1	1	Tuition loan available
12	1	1	1	1	1	Free computer classes offered
13	1	1	0	1	1	
14	0	1	0	0	1	
15	0	0	0	0	0	
16	1	0	0	1	1	
17	1	1	0	1	1	City offers classes; lib has mentoring program
18	0	0	0	0	0	
19	1	1	1	1	1	
20	0	1	0	0	1	
21	1	1	1	1	1	
22	1	0	1	1	1	
23	0	1	1	1	0	
24	0	1	0	0	1	
25	1	1	0	1	1	Lib closed 1 day/yr for training
Total (N = 25)	12 (48%)	17 (68%)	7 (28%)	12 (48%)	15 (60%)	

1 = presence of training or incentive; 0 = absence of training or incentive

group, the average number of courses or seminars attended was 2.5.

In the area of continuing education incentives, it appears that overall this group of urban public libraries is slightly less generous than Boyer and Theimer's academic libraries in providing flexible scheduling for day classes and allowing attendance at professional meetings and seminars on work time. Seventy percent of Boyer and Theimer's group offered flextime for classes and 74% allowed for paid time attendance at professional meetings. In the current study, the figures are 68% allowing the former and 60% the latter. Of the libraries studied here, 12 or 48% of the libraries provide tuition assistance for their nonprofessionals to continue their formal education, and 7 or 28% allow for library-related classes to be taken on work time.

Looking at data collected on the continuing education activities of the nonprofessionals themselves, we find that, of the 112 surveyed, 18 or 16.1% have taken library science courses in the last two years. The average number of courses taken was three. Of the 18, 10 reported that they were presently working toward an MLS degree.

Data collected concerning the presence of computer-related training among nonprofessionals showed that, of the 112 surveyed, 27 or 24.1% of the group had attended in-house courses or seminars in the past year that dealt with

some aspect of library automation. The average number of computer-related course or seminars attended was 2.1. Thirty nonprofessionals or 26.6% of the group have taken computer-related courses or seminars in the past two years in an environment outside their own library. Of these 30, 12 have taken courses in word processing, 12 in database or spreadsheet software applications, 11 in on-line search technology, ten in some form of library-centered automation, and seven in other related areas, including CD-ROM, computer programming, AutoCad, and educational software. In all, 43 or 38.4% of nonprofessionals surveyed have had some type of computer-related training, either in-house or external, within the past two years.

The purpose of continuing education incentives is to motivate and enable employees to improve their occupational effectiveness by supplementing their conceptual and technical skills with formal coursework. In a very basic attempt to ascertain the effectiveness of financial assistance for continuing education, the libraries studied were divided into two groups. The first group was composed of libraries that offered tuition assistance to their nonprofessionals, allowed them to take courses on work time, or both. The second group did not offer either of these incentives. In each group the number of nonprofessionals who had taken library science or computer-related courses in the last two years or who were currently

working on a degree in a field other than library science was determined. In group one, which enjoyed the financial incentives, 50% of the nonprofessionals had taken courses or were working on a degree. In group two, which did not have the incentives, 41.4% had done so. A chi-square test was done to determine if there was any significant difference between the two groups. The resulting chi-square was 0.8 which was not significant at .05 level.

Career Ladder and Advancement:

Table 3 (page 33) lists the number of positions in each surveyed library which reference directors indicated fell within the duties and responsibilities of the respective LEPU categories. At the bottom of the table the mean number of positions in each of the categories is shown. It is apparent that there is great diversity from library to library but some consistency is evident. The Technical Assistant category seems to be the least utilized of the three with an average of about one position per library and six libraries reporting no positions at all within this classification. The sample suggests that within the position structure of the average urban public library we will find 1-2 positions at the Associate level, one position at the Technical Assistant level, and two positions at the Clerical level. This somewhat exceeds the minimum recommendation of one position per category as set forth in the LEPU statement.

TABLE 3

NONPROFESSIONAL CAREER LADDER STRUCTURE
OF SURVEYED LIBRARIES

Library #	# Positions in Associate Category	#Positions in Tech Assistant Category	#Positions in Clerk Category
1	4	0	2
2	1	0	1
3	1	1	2
4	0	1	3
5	1	0	2
6	1	1	1
7	1	1	2
8	2	2	2
9	1	1	3
10	2	1	1
11	2	2	2
12	2	0	1
13	2	1	1
14	1	3	3
15	1	3	3
16	2	1	3
17	1	2	1
18	1	1	2
19	1	2	2
20	2	1	2
21	2	0	2
22	1	1	2
23	1	1	0
24	2	1	1
25	2	0	2
Mean # of Positions	1.5	1.1	1.8

Libraries with no positions in: Associate category = 1
Tech. Asst. category = 6
Clerk category = 1

Having established that a career ladder does exist for nonprofessionals in this group of libraries, the question still remains, is it possible to advance within that career ladder from lowest level to highest. At least in this group of reference departments, the answer seems to be, yes, it is possible, but not probable. As will be discussed later in this paper (see Table 8), in both the Technical Assistant and Clerk categories, there is a significant drop in the percentage of nonprofessionals working from six to ten years and those continuing on for 11-15 years in library service. As would be expected, there are a few senior people in both categories in the 15+ years range, but not enough to mask the attrition. It would seem that either Technical Assistants and Clerks are promoted to a higher category with 6-10 years of experience, or they quit library work altogether. The former is, of course, most desirable, but this survey points to the latter. Of the 39 Associate level nonprofessionals in the survey who reported having worked at their present library from 0 to ten years, 79.5% had entered full-time employment at the Associate level.

An attempt was also made in this research to discern the possibility of advancing from nonprofessional to professional status without an MLS degree. Of the 25 libraries surveyed, only four (16%) stated that it was possible in their organization to achieve professional

status without an MLS. Two of these libraries said professional ranking could be attained by passing state exams. One library cited a Master's degree in another relevant field as adequate while another recognized education and experience equivalent to an MLS. These exceptions noted, it can generally be stated that the large majority of nonprofessionals in urban public libraries never achieve professional status without securing an MLS. This realization brings us to the question of whether nonprofessionals are interested in pursuing a professional library education. Of the 112 nonprofessionals surveyed, 62 (55.7%) stated that they are now considering or have in the past seriously considered attempting an MLS. These 62 are in addition to the 10 nonprofessionals who are already taking courses in an MLS program. It appears that a primary reason for a large percentage of these 62 nonprofessionals not yet commencing professional study is the absence of a local university which offers the MLS degree. Thirty-seven (59.7%) of the 62 said that they would presently consider working toward an MLS if such a program was available in their area. Twenty-five (40.3%) of this group were within an area served by a library school but had not chosen to pursue the MLS.

TABLE 4

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY OF SURVEYED NONPROFESSIONALS
(N = 112)

LEPU Category	Does Not Act in a Supervisory Capacity	Acts in a Supervisory Capacity	Average # People Supervised
Associate (N = 69)	49 (71%)	20 (29%)	2.5
Technical Assistant (N = 24)	20 (83.3%)	4 (16.7%)	3.5
Clerk (N = 19)	16 (84.2%)	3 (15.8%)	1.7
TOTAL (N = 112)	87 (77.7%)	25 (22.3%)	2.6

As mentioned earlier, no study of this nature has addressed the question of the supervisory responsibilities of nonprofessionals. Table 4 documents the percentage of nonprofessionals in each LEPU category who act in a supervisory capacity and the average number of people supervised by each category of employee. At the bottom of the table, total figures for all three categories are given. As could be expected, the percentage of nonprofessionals involved with supervisory duties decreases from the top of the LEPU category to the bottom. A little less than one-third of

all Associate level personnel act as supervisors while only about half that percentage of Technical Assistants and Clerks have this responsibility. Associate level supervisors have responsibility for an average of 2.5 people. It is felt that, due to the small percentage of Technical Assistants and Clerks in this group involved in supervision, the figures given for the average number of people supervised by these personnel (3.5 and 1.7, respectively) are probably not valid in forming any generalizations about the supervisory responsibilities of these categories. A replication of this research in other departments or across entire library systems would probably provide more valid data to address this question. Looking at the total figures for this group, it can be seen that a little less than one quarter of the nonprofessionals have supervisory responsibilities with an average number of people supervised of 2.6.

Education and Work Experience:

Table 5 (page 38) is a breakdown of the highest academic levels attained by the surveyed nonprofessionals according to their LEPU position category. As would be expected, as a whole, the Associates have a higher overall level of education. Of this group, 89.9% have a bachelors or graduate-level degree. However, the Technical Assistants are not far behind with 62.6% of the group possessing bachelors degrees or higher. Surprisingly, there is a much

TABLE 5

HIGHEST ACADEMIC LEVELS ATTAINED BY SURVEYED NONPROFESSIONALS
(N = 112)

LEPU CATEGORY	NO COLLEGE	SOME COLLEGE	ASSOCIATES	BACHELORS	MASTERS	PhD
Associate (N = 69)	1 (1.5%)	5 (7.3%)	1 (1.5%)	52 (75.4%)	9 (13.0%)	1 (1.5%)
Technical Assistant (N = 24)	2 (8.3%)	5 (20.8%)	2 (8.3%)	7 (29.2%)	8 (33.4%)	-
Clerk (N = 19)	4 (21.1%)	9 (47.4%)	4 (21.1%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3%)	-
TOTAL (N = 112)	7 (6.3%)	19 (17.0%)	7 (6.3%)	60 (53.6%)	18 (16.1%)	1 (1%)

greater percentage of masters level employees among the Technical Assistants than among the Associates. In the clerical group, which is really too small to draw valid generalizations from, by far the largest percentage (47.4%) have some college experience but possess no degree. This is the only level in which the associates degree appears as the highest degree in a large percentage of the group. Three of the four associates degrees in this category were in business-related fields. The bottom row of Table 3 shows the highest educational levels attained by the total number of 112 nonprofessionals. These data show that 70.7% of the group have bachelors degrees or higher-level graduate degrees, 6.3% have associate degrees, 17.0% have some college, while 6.3% have no college at all. These results are remarkably similar to those obtained by Boyer and Theimer in academic libraries and Roper in health science libraries.

Table 6 (page 40) shows the number of degrees held by each nonprofessional and the subject area concentration of those degrees. The total number of degrees does not reflect the total number of nonprofessionals who possess them because some nonprofessionals have two or more degrees, each of which is represented here. Also, if a nonprofessional declared a degree with a double-major in two different subject areas, that degree was listed twice, once under each of the subject areas. A tally of all

TABLE 6

ACADEMIC DEGREES HELD BY SURVEYED NONPROFESSIONALS

ACCORDING TO SUBJECT AREA CONCENTRATION*

Associates (N = 9)		Bachelors (N = 83)	
Social Sciences	= 1	Social Sciences	= 30
Business	= 5	Business	= 7
Science/Technology	= 1	Science/Technology	= 5
Arts & Humanities	= 1	Arts & Humanities	= 29
Not Stated	= 1	Library Science	= 2
		Not Stated	= 10

Masters (N = 20)		Total Degrees (N = 113)	
Social Science	= 8	Social Science	= 39 (34.5%)
Business	= 1	Business	= 13 (11.5%)
Science/Technology	= 0	Science/Technology	= 6 (5.3%)
Arts & Humanities	= 8	Arts & Humanities	= 39 (34.5%)
Library Science	= 2	Library Science	= 4 (3.5%)
Not Stated	= 1	Not Stated	= 12 (10.6%)

Doctorate (N = 1)	
Arts & Humanities	= 1

*Double-majors which subsume two subject areas are listed as one degree in each relevant subject area.

degrees, presented at the bottom of Table 4, reinforces that time-honored maxim applicable to professional librarians as well, i.e., libraries are places for social science and arts and humanities majors to find employment. A formidable 69% of all degrees held by nonprofessionals were either from a social science or arts and humanities concentration. Business was a distant third with 11.5% while science and technology majors barely put in an appearance at 5.3%. Four nonprofessionals also possess degrees with library science majors. Almost 11% of the nonprofessionals did not state the subject area concentration of their degrees.

The picture is quite different when looking at the degrees currently being pursued by nonprofessionals in the sample. Sixteen nonprofessionals stated that they were working toward a degree in a field other than library science. Table 7 (page 42) presents a breakdown of the degrees being sought and the subject area concentration. Once again, double-majors were listed as one degree in each relevant subject area. At the bottom of the table, total figures are presented. In this group, science and technology majors with 31.3% of the total degrees being sought have risen to first place, with arts and humanities and business students tied for second with 25% each. Social sciences are last with 12.5%. One nonprofessional did not indicate their subject area.

TABLE 7

ACADEMIC DEGREES OTHER THAN LIBRARY SCIENCE CURRENTLY BEING PURSUED BY SURVEYED NONPROFESSIONALS*

Associates
(N = 0)

Bachelors
(N = 14)

Social Science	= 2
Business	= 4
Science/Technology	= 3
Arts & Humanities	= 4
Not Stated	= 1

Masters
(N = 2)

Science/Technology = 2

Doctorate
(N = 0)

Total Degrees
(N = 16)

Social Science	= 2 (12.5%)
Business	= 4 (25%)
Science/Technology	= 5 (31.3%)
Arts & Humanities	= 4 (25%)
Not Stated	= 1 (6.3%)

*Double majors which subsume two subjects areas are listed as one degree in each relevant subject area.

TABLE 8

LIBRARY WORK EXPERIENCE
OF SURVEYED NONPROFESSIONALS
(N = 112)

LEPU CATEGORY	0-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	15+ yrs
Associate (N = 69)	26 (37.7%)	13 (18.8%)	15 (21.7%)	15 (21.7%)
Technical Assistant (N = 24)	14 (58.3%)	7 (29.2%)	0	3 (12.5%)
Clerk (N = 19)	8 (42.1%)	6 (31.6%)	2 (10.5%)	3 (15.8%)
TOTAL (N = 112)	48 (42.9%)	26 (23.2%)	17 (15.2%)	21 (18.9%)

Table 8 illustrates the work experience background of the surveyed nonprofessionals both as a total group and broken down according to LEPU category. It is evident that as a whole this group is moderately more consistent in terms of longevity than either Roper's or Wheat's. This is due in large part to a relatively even distribution across the years in the Associate category. In both the Technical Assistant and Clerk category, we see a significant drop in the percentage of nonprofessionals working from six to ten years and those continuing for 11-15 years in the field.

CONCLUSION

The results of this survey support in many instances the findings of previous academic library studies. They suggest that in urban public libraries, as in their academic counterparts, nonprofessionals (particularly those at the Associate level) seem to comprise an integral and important part of reference service. As in previous academic library studies, the nonprofessionals in this survey provide roughly one-third of direct patron contact at the reference desk. Further affirmation of the extent of nonprofessional reference responsibilities was evident in the significant amount of reference service provided by these employees without any supervison from professional librarians.

In the area of in-service training, this group of libraries was found to be utilizing formal in-service training at a far higher percentage than previously surveyed academic libraries. About one-half of the libraries surveyed offered formal training courses or seminars while approximately one-half of all the nonprofessionals surveyed stated that they had attended such a course or seminar in the past year. An interesting avenue of future research would include an in-depth comparison of the reference and

operational efficiency of nonprofessionals in libraries which offer formal training programs and in those which do not.

Continuing education incentives among the surveyed libraries are roughly equivalent in scope and number to those in academic libraries. Flexible work scheduling to allow for day classes and paid attendance at professional meetings are the most common incentives, these being offered by approximately two-thirds of the libraries.

Only a small percentage of the nonprofessionals surveyed had taken any library science courses in the past two years and most of those who had were working toward an MLS. A lack of access to library schools also uncovered in this study may help to explain this small number. In contrast to the small number of library courses taken, well over one-fourth of the nonprofessionals surveyed have taken one or more computer-related courses in the past two years. In combination with in-house training received, well over one-third of the nonprofessionals surveyed have had some up-to-date training in computers and/or library automation. It would seem that reference nonprofessionals in urban public libraries are taking significant steps toward preparing themselves for the impact of the new technology on library service. A future study might seek to compare the continuing training in automation received by nonprofessionals with that received by professionals.

would be interesting to see if this high percentage of advanced degrees continues to appear at this level in other, hopefully broader, studies in the future. Also, a comparison of the educational levels of Technical Assistants in other phases of library operations with those in the reference departments would be of value. For now, it remains an unanswered question as to why employees of such advanced academic standing are not being utilized at the highest nonprofessional levels.

After grouping the academic degrees attained by the population according to subject area concentration, it was found that well over two-thirds of all the reference nonprofessionals' degrees are in some area of the arts and humanities or the social sciences. Business and science and technology degrees are seriously underrepresented in this group, especially considering the growing importance of information in these areas to the public domain. Conspicuously absent in the population are nonprofessionals with two-year library technology degrees. It seems that reference departments in urban public libraries may not have felt any impact from formal library paraprofessional training. In contrast, degrees which nonprofessionals in the group are currently working toward show some bias toward science and technology and business degrees. It is disheartening to think that most of these nonprofessionals who are working toward business and science and technology

An attempt to compare the extent to which financial assistance motivates the nonprofessional to continue his/her formal education was made. No significant difference was found between continuing education activities among nonprofessionals in those libraries which offered financial assistance and those which did not. This result implies that financial assistance alone does not motivate nonprofessionals to expand their continuing education activities. A more in-depth study of the relationship between incentives and continuing education is needed within both nonprofessional and professional ranks.

Data compiled on the educational background of the group show that urban public library reference nonprofessionals have academic credentials comparable to their academic library counterparts. As in previous academic library samples, it was found that about two-thirds of all the reference nonprofessionals surveyed possess a bachelors degree or higher level graduate degree. The educational background of the sample was further analyzed by grouping it according to LEPU category. Interpreting this data, we find that 89.9% of all library Associates meet or exceed the educational criterion suggested by LEPU while 91.7% of the Technical Assistants and 79.1% of Clerical employees do so. It was discovered that a much greater percentage of the Technical Assistants group possessed Master's degrees than that which occurred among the Associates group. It

degrees will, after graduating, take both their subject expertise and the information management skills they have learned on the job and move into another field. More and more, libraries are going to need people with this kind of training. A serious effort needs to be made to encourage and provide incentives for these people to pursue a professional library education. This should be done at both the local and state levels and through the ALA at the national level. Attracting business and technically-oriented people to the information management field will not only improve service to the patron in vital areas, but will also help boost the salaries toward equity with other business/technical professions.

This study found that overall there is more employment consistency across the years in the surveyed group than in previous academic library surveys. This is due mostly to longevity in the Associate group. In the Technical Assistant and Clerical groups, it was found that a large percentage of nonprofessionals leave the library field after six to ten years of employment. This attrition occurs slightly later than that recorded in academic library surveys in which the largest percentage of nonprofessionals quit before six years of library employment had been completed.

The average number of positions in the nonprofessional career ladder for the libraries in this group is

one to two positions at the Associate level, one position at the Technical Assistant level, and two positions at the Clerical level. This slightly exceeds the minimum LEPU recommendation but is probably still inadequate in comparison to those career ladders present in the private sector. The Technical Assistant category was, overall, the most underutilized. Additional research needs to be conducted to determine whether this class of duties and responsibilities is simply not needed as a separate group in urban public libraries (these being subsumed by the Associate and Clerk categories) or whether the current research is flawed in that reference directors did not fully understand the nature of the classification and incorrectly placed Technical Assistant positions within the Associate or Clerk categories.

It is unfortunate that the Clerk category with the most positions in the average career ladder is that one which is found least in this study. Once again it must be stressed that a replication of all or part of the current research in departments other than reference is sorely needed to accurately gauge the full contribution of the entire spectrum of nonprofessional employees.

In response to the question of career advancement, the data indicate that the great majority of Associate level reference positions are not filled by promotion from lower-level nonprofessional positions, but are rather

filled by hiring employees directly into the category. A reason behind this phenomenon could be the educational prerequisites for entering the Associate category. Out of the 25 libraries surveyed, 20 or 80% stated that formal academic course work and/or a higher academic degree was necessary to obtain higher level nonprofessional positions. Perhaps urban public library reference departments are not providing adequate encouragement to their lower and mid-level nonprofessionals to motivate them to achieve the educational qualifications necessary to advance. This explanation is weakened, however, when the high educational levels of many of the Technical Assistants in this survey is taken into consideration. Another cause could be inherent in the personnel structure of the reference departments studied here. The heavy preponderance of Associate level personnel in these departments obviously limits the pool of lower level nonprofessionals from which to draw. Lower level nonprofessionals in other departments may choose to climb the career ladder within their present area of service rather than switching to reference duties. A final, more distressing, explanation for this phenomenon may be that, unlike Clemens' findings in academic libraries, in urban public libraries it is the Clerk and Technical Assistant categories that are the dead-ends rather than the Associates who are the true career nonprofessionals.

Judging from the responses of the surveyed libraries, it can be safely stated that it is only in rare instances that a nonprofessional can acquire professional status without an MLS degree. When the nonprofessionals were queried about their interest in a professional library education, it was found that about one-half of the group at one time seriously considered this alternative. It appeared that about one-half of those who had considered a professional education were prevented from doing so by the absence of a graduate library school in their local area. It would be an interesting topic for further research to discover why the other half of the group who had considered professional education had not done so, even though an MLS was available locally. The large number of nonprofessionals who would pursue an MLS if one was available in their area should encourage library schools to set up part-time extension programs of one sort or another to serve large metropolitan areas in their state or regions.

In surveying the supervisory responsibilities of the reference nonprofessionals, it was found that about one-quarter of these employees act in this capacity. As expected, the largest number of supervisors were found in the Associate category. The author suggests that the supervisory responsibilities of the nonprofessionals in this population may be somewhat negatively skewed due to the high percentage of highly educated Associate level

personnel in the reference departments surveyed as well as the non-regimented nature of reference work. These Associates, like their professional counterparts, may perform their functions in a more collegial, egalitarian manner than in other departments who employ more mid- and lower-level nonprofessionals and operate in a more structured environment.

This study has supplemented the existing body of research dealing with both nonprofessionals in general and reference nonprofessionals in particular. It is of unique value in that it is, to this author's knowledge, the first general descriptive survey of the topic from the public library perspective. The study has also introduced the concept of describing nonprofessional employees by virtue of the placement of their job positions in the LEPU career ladder structure. This approach has made possible the isolation of differences in job status, reference utilization, educational background, work longevity, and position advancement which would not have been possible if the population had simply been described as one group. Replication of this research, particularly the use of the LEPU model in both public and academic libraries, is strongly suggested.

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LEPU RECOMMENDED CAREER LADDER

Figure 1

CATEGORIES OF LIBRARY PERSONNEL—PROFESSIONAL

TITLE For positions requiring:		BASIC REQUIREMENTS	NATURE OF RESPONSIBILITY
library-related qualifications	nonlibrary-related qualifications		
Senior Librarian	Senior Specialist	In addition to relevant experience, education beyond the M.A. [i.e., a master's degree in any of its variant designations: M.A., M.L.S., M.S.L.S., M.Ed., etc.] as: post-master's degree; Ph.D.; relevant continuing education in many forms	Top-level responsibilities, including but not limited to administration; superior knowledge of some aspect of librarianship, or of other subject fields of value to the library
Librarian	Specialist	Master's degree	Professional responsibilities including those of management, which require independent judgment, interpretation of rules and procedures, analysis of library problems, and formulation of original and creative solutions for them (normally utilizing knowledge of the subject field represented by the academic degree)

CATEGORIES OF LIBRARY PERSONNEL—SUPPORTIVE

TITLE		BASIC REQUIREMENTS	NATURE OF RESPONSIBILITY
Library Associate	Associate Specialist	Bachelor's degree (with or without course work in library science); OR bachelor's degree, plus additional academic work short of the master's degree (in librarianship for the Library Associate; in other relevant subject fields for the Associate Specialist)	Supportive responsibilities at a high level, normally working within the established procedures and techniques, and with some supervision by a professional, but requiring judgment, and subject knowledge such as is represented by a full, four-year college education culminating in the bachelor's degree
Library Technical Assistant	Technical Assistant	At least two years of college-level study; OR A.A. degree, with or without Library Technical Assistant training; OR post-secondary school training in relevant skills	Tasks performed as supportive staff to Associates and higher ranks, following established rules and procedures, and including, at the top level, supervision of such tasks
Clerk		Business school or commercial courses, supplemented by in-service training or on-the-job experience	Clerical assignments as required by the individual library

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Below you will find excerpts from the Library Education and Personnel Utilization statement. The three categories of nonprofessional positions suggested by the ALA as an effective career-ladder framework are listed in column 1. In column two those duties and responsibilities which the ALA feels should be performed by employees in each category are described. In column 3 you are asked to designate those position classifications used by your library which correspond to each category in the LEPU statement. If there are multiple levels of positions within each category, please include each level in descending order from top to bottom. If your library has no positions which correspond to a particular category, please place N/A in column 3 to the right of that category. Please see sample form on the following page for clarification of these instructions.

1. LEPU Category	2. Duties and Responsibilities	3. Your Position Titles
Library Associate	Supportive responsibilities at a high level, normally working within the established procedures and techniques, and with some supervision by a professional, but requiring judgment, and subject knowledge such as is represented by a full, four-year college education culminating in the bachelor's degree.	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Library Technical Assistant	Tasks performed as supportive staff to Associates and higher ranks, following established rules and procedures, and including, at the top level, supervision of such tasks.	_____ _____ _____ _____
Library Clerk	Clerical assignments as required by the individual library.	_____ _____ _____

Sample for questionnaire, part 1:

1. LEPU Category	2. Duties and Responsibilities	3. Your Position Titles
Library Associate	Supportive responsibilities at a high level, normally working within the established procedures and techniques, and with some supervision by a professional, but requiring judgment, and subject knowledge such as is represented by a full, four-year college education culminating in the bachelor's degree.	LIBRARY SENIOR ASST. 3 LIBRARY SENIOR ASST. 2 LIBRARY SENIOR ASST. 1 _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Library Technical Assistant	Tasks performed as supportive staff to Associates and higher ranks, following established rules and procedures, and including, at the top level, supervision of such tasks.	LIBRARY ASSISTANT 3 LIBRARY ASSISTANT 2 LIBRARY ASSISTANT 1 _____
Library Clerk	Clerical assignments as required by the individual library.	LIBRARY CLERK 3 LIBRARY CLERK 2 LIBRARY CLERK 1

2. How many employees in the reference department or information center occupy those positions which fall within any of those categories in question #1?

_____

3. In your library is promotion from the lowest nonprofessional category to the highest category probable based solely upon length of service and position competency?

_____

4. If you answered no to question #3, is formal college or university course work and/or a higher academic degree a prerequisite for promotion to higher level nonprofessional positions?

_____

5. In your library is it possible to achieve professional rank without obtaining an MLS degree?

_____

If yes, please explain:

6. Does your library have an incentive or career development program which assists nonprofessionals in expanding their education and/or job skills?

_____

If yes, does this program include:
(check all which apply)

_____tuition assistance?

_____flexible scheduling to allow for day classes at an educational institution?

_____library-related classes taken on work time?

_____formal "in-house" training courses or seminars?

_____library-related professional meetings or seminars attended on work time?

_____other (please specify):

7. How many professional librarians are employed in the reference department or information center?

_____

8. How many of these professional librarians work the reference desk in regular shifts?

_____

9. On an average, how many hours per week does each professional work at the reference desk?

_____

10. How many hours per week is the reference desk in operation?

_____

Thank you for your cooperation.

--Please complete this questionnaire and return to the head of your reference department. Thank you.

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your present job classification? _____
   (i.e., Library Clerk I,II,III; Library Assistant I,II,III)

2. What was your job classification when you entered into employment with this library?

   _____

3. How long have you been employed at this library? _____

4. How many years of library work experience do you possess? _____

5. How many years (if any) of post-secondary education (college, university, technical school, etc.) do you possess?

   _____

6. Which of the following academic degrees (if any) do you possess?

	degree	field of study
_____	no degree	N/A
_____	Associate's	_____
_____	Bachelor's	_____
_____	Master's	_____
_____	Other _____ (specify)	_____

7. Have you in the past two years taken any library science courses at a university, college, or junior college?

   _____ If yes, how many? _____

8. Are you currently working toward an MLS degree? _____

9. Are you now considering or have you ever seriously considered initiating study toward an MLS degree?

   _____

10. Are there institutions in your area which offer an MLS program? _____
    If not, would you consider obtaining an MLS if there were?

    _____

11. Are you currently working toward an academic degree in a field other than library science?

    _____

    If yes, please state the degree and field of study:

    _____ degree _____ field of study

12. In the past two years have you taken any courses, seminars, or workshops in computer-related skills or library automation? (Please exclude "in-house" training at your own library)

_____ If yes, how many? _____

If yes, did these courses include the following: (check all that apply)

_____ word processing

_____ database software or spreadsheets

_____ online search

_____ library automation

_____ other _____
(please specify)

13. In the past year has your library offered any "in-house" training courses or seminars at which your attendance was requested or required?

_____ If yes, how many? _____

14. If you answered "yes" to question #13, how many of these courses or seminars involved training in some aspect of library automation?

_____

15. During an average week, how many scheduled hours do you work at the reference desk?

_____

16. Approximately how many hours per week do you work at the reference desk without a professional librarian being present at the desk?

_____

17. What is your average work week at the library (number of hours)?

_____

18. Do your position duties involve the supervision of other library personnel?

_____

If yes, how many do you normally supervise? _____

Appendix D

Daniel R. Smith
C-4 Village Square
Carrboro, North Carolina 27510

October 29, 1987

Reference Director
Library Name
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Reference Director:

I am currently involved in a master's project with the School of Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As part of this project, I am conducting a survey of those persons working in a nonprofessional capacity in reference departments and/or information centers of selected southeastern public libraries. I will attempt to compile a composite record of the educational background, experience, and training of reference nonprofessionals working at different position classifications.

I am asking for your help in identifying those individuals in your library who should be included in the survey. I am interested in distributing a very brief questionnaire to all nonprofessionals working in your headquarters library in its reference department and/or information center. Enclosed is a brief questionnaire asking for some information about your library and its staff members. When you return this initial inquiry to me, I will know how many of your staff have nonprofessional status. I will then send you brief questionnaires which I ask that you distribute to each nonprofessional. A postage-paid envelope will be included for you to return these questionnaires to me.

In order for the survey to be of maximum value, a high rate of response is essential. Your cooperation in identifying your staff members and urging them to complete the questionnaires will be of great help in completing the survey. In reporting the results of the survey, no individual or library will be identified and all results will be confidential.

I realize that this research effort will be taking time away from your already busy schedule. However, I think that you will agree that the public library nonprofessional has been sorely neglected in the library literature and that this important agent of library service deserves to be recognized and profiled.

Please complete and return the enclosed questionnaire by November 15th. Thank you for your time and assistance in this project.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel R. Smith
School of Library Science
UNC-Chapel Hill

encl.

Appendix E

Daniel R. Smith
C-4 Village Square
Carrboro, North Carolina 27510

December 22, 1987

Reference Director
Library Name
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Reference Director:

Thank you so much for the return of my initial survey. In this envelope you will find questionnaires for the nonprofessionals employed in your department. I would ask that you distribute these and encourage your staff to fill them out completely. Please collect the questionnaires and return them to me in the enclosed postage-paid envelope as soon as possible.

I am very excited about this project and strongly feel that together we may contribute a report of some value to the library literature. Your assistance is much needed and deeply appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel R. Smith
School of Library Science
UNC-Chapel Hill

encl.